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ABSTRACT

The papers in this monograph attempt to identify some basic characteristics and conditions of educational excellence. Under consideration are: (1) traditional beliefs that underlie the structure of the schools, and what Americans expect the public schools' responsibilities should be; (2) the purpose and social role of the schools; (3) educational objectives and the environment for excellence in the schools; (4) the kinds and modes of learning that must be promoted if the public schools are to enhance students' intellectual development and achievement; and (5) educating teachers for excellence. The concluding note states that excellence in education will require persistent attention, high tolerance for diversity and ambiguity, and a regular diet of intelligence and creativity. (JD)

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PRIDE AND PROMISE
Schools of Excellence For All The People

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AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL STUDIES ASSOCIATION

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FOREWORD

In the Fall of 1983, at the annual meeting of the American Educational Studies Association (AESA), there was much discussion of the burgeoning list of reports on American schooling, of the mounting public concern over education, of the lengthening list of the recommendations and the change initiatives for setting things right. Many noted the lack of touch with the realities of the classroom reflected in some of the reports, and the slim hopes for positive accomplishments of some of the recommendations. The address of outgoing AESA President Charles A. Tesconi, Jr., called attention to the absence of any statement of what education scholars might have to say about how to improve schools. At its business meeting, the AESA membership approved a motion presented by Tesconi and asked three of its members to prepare such a statement. You will find it on the pages that follow. While AESA provided support and encouragement for the effort, *Pride and Promise* reflects the views and ideas of the three authors. It is an important contribution to the current debate.

William F. O'Neill, President
American Educational Studies Association
University of Southern California

Faustine Jones-Wilson, President-Elect
American Educational Studies Association
Howard University

November, 1984

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We wish to express our gratitude to Janice O'Donnell of The University of Vermont and Raymond Scheele of Hofstra University. They listened to us and offered thoughtful criticisms and suggestions which have strengthened this statement. They, of course, are not responsible for its shortcomings. We also want to thank Terry L. Baker of Hofstra for his extraordinary help and wise counsel. We are grateful to Barbara Matthews of The University of Vermont and Deborah Wood of The University of Maryland for their excellent typing, and proof reading skills. Their good will in the face of constant revisions enhanced the quality of our work. John Ventre of The University of Maryland helped in collecting bibliographical information. Finally, we deeply appreciate the support of the American Educational Studies Association and the encouragement of its members.

PREFACE

Criticisms of and prescriptions for improving schools are coming in from everywhere -- from governors and state capitals, from dozens of state and local school boards, from hundreds of citizen task forces, from attention-getting reports of national agencies, from foundation supported studies, and even from the Oval office. The major cause for this overdue interest is the widely shared, strongly held conviction that schools have not been serving us very well.

Such a state of affairs could move Americans to a much needed public conversation as to how and to what we want to educate on-coming generations. But events in recent months have pressed toward immediate and precipitous response. The exaggerated and anxiety-provoking rhetoric surrounding school problems and reform, the intense politicalization of the "excellence" movement, and the significance of what has been left unsaid are circumventing the possibility of a reflective public dialogue. We hope this document will help stimulate the needed conversation.

Schools and school professionals have too long suffered the condescension of critics and reformers who are quick to ignore the vulnerability of schools to shifts in the dials of public preference, the expansive and burdensome mission of the school, the unmet professional needs of teachers, and the ambiguity surrounding policy and practice which follows from the *ad hoc*, unarticulated nature of school purpose. Critics and reformers of this ilk are like the squinter who believes that the narrower the view the more one can see. They limit us to predictable cliched responses to school problems.

Americans should never abide poor performance in public schools. Long-standing and sentimental bromides about them must give way to hard truths and rigorous judgments. But performance must be seen in its proper context. Any initiatives for reform must begin with that context, an examination of what schools do, what we really want them to do, how to judge them fairly, and how to help teachers, other school professionals, and students attain and exercise greater efficacy. This document is devoted to these important considerations.

Readers will note that we tend often to have the high school in mind in what we are saying. We do so for a cluster of reasons. One is that the 1980's appear to be the decade of the high school. This institution is now receiving the kind of attention that previous recent decades focused on earlier levels of education. We also believe that the high school warrants particular attention because achievement indicators

and participant satisfaction rates suggest that high schools are, at the moment, in far greater difficulty than elementary schools.

Beyond an emphasis on high schools, we want to focus the public conversation on the school as the meaningful educational arena. As everyone knows, the educational drama has a large cast, with myriad actors playing national, federal, state, and local roles. The size or centrality of the part surely varies, depending on circumstances and issues. There are times for federal leadership and occasions for state legislative action, but we Americans tend to think about education in practical and immediate terms. Although we may talk about it generally, even with considerable heat, we tend to take a much different tack regarding the institution close at hand: our school. We judge our own school differently, typically more generously, probably because we know its teachers and administrators and can see its many effects for ourselves. It can draw us into active participation and passionate concern. National opinion polls regularly detect this curious split in American attitudes toward education. We tend to be more positive about "our" schools than about schools in general.

In this document readers will find a systematic attempt to see this relation of Americans to their schools as a powerful force for educational improvement. We view it as the leverage by which excellence can be attained, for that high and most difficult aspiration has meaning finally as it comes to characterize the purpose and results of particular schools. We Americans want to be proud of our schools, and we want schools to keep the promise of education for our children. Because we do, we are better able to understand and support efforts to achieve schools of excellence for all the people.

We trust that readers will find the pages to follow provocative and helpful. We regret any flaws and shortcomings and affirm our shared commitment to the ideas they advance.

Burlington, Vermont
August, 1984

Mary Anne Raywid
Charles A. Tesconi, Jr.
Donald R. Warren

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ONE

THE CHALLENGE OF OUR EXPECTATIONS

Three beliefs deeply embedded in the American ethos account for our enduring national commitment to public schooling. These are:

- democracy depends upon an educated citizenry;
- America needs a social institution which teaches cognitive skills *and* the array of values, attitudes and behaviors essential to the successful performance of adult roles;
- the public school is simultaneously a major instrument of social improvement and of individual realization.

The invention and continuance of public schooling is explained by the first belief, while the numerous and varied functions assigned the school are accounted for by the others.

Over the years, policy based on these convictions has granted enormous power to the public school. Compulsory attendance has made it the only institution through which virtually all children pass. The school legally acts in place of parents for a major portion of the time children are minors. It fashions a culture children experience constantly, at the time when they are the most impressionable. It helps children and youth sift out the meaner from the more noble aspects of American society. It is charged with doing all it can to ensure that on-coming generations have more and better opportunities than earlier ones. It is given the power to help young people challenge established views and beliefs. In short, and implicitly or explicitly, Americans give the school great power to help shape the thinking and behaviors of their children, to show them how to make America better, and to help young people become other and better than their parents.

Most Americans did not challenge this power as long as they believed their expectations were being met. They did not do so because most Americans continued to see the public school as our chief agency for

- helping individuals to contribute to and flourish in society;
- helping on-coming generations to have a better chance at life;
- enhancing social equality and social progress;
- ensuring cultural stability and domestic peace.

The meaning of these expectations has never been rendered crystal clear for any era; but as long as the promise they offered seemed

reachable, and the difficulties they imposed upon the school seemed manageable, faith in schooling remained unshaken. The school's purpose was a given; articulating that purpose was not problematic.

Today, however, these expectations appear ambiguous, their warranty is doubted, and the diverse means for achieving them are subject to controversy. School purpose no longer seems manifest for Americans and their longstanding faith in schooling has been rendered fragile.

"At least some of the questions about the usefulness of the public school . . . might fall away if we were to begin to look for some consensus in our own society on the purposes of schooling itself."

Robert Kingston,
The Kettering Review
Winter, 1983

Recently, numerous studies and reports have drawn attention to school problems, while issuing diverse prescriptions in attempts to alter practice and shore up weakened belief. Having faded gradually from public favor and apparently from public interest for over a decade, public education has suddenly skyrocketed to national prominence. More than 275 committees, commissions, and task forces in 50 states are at work on school improvement plans. In some states, government and education officials are vying to produce and oversee the reform program. One unfortunate by-product is the intensely political character the issue has taken on. This has made it difficult to sustain the kind of reflective, research-supported deliberation which durable school improvement so urgently requires. And the current lack of overall agreement as to public school purpose makes political intensification and unexamined response real dangers. For these will lead, in turn, to even greater disappointments.

The prescriptions of the most discussed proposals for school improvement are reducible to two or three common themes: heightened standards for student performance; standardized, leaner curricula; and fewer student options. Such recommendations are impoverished in at least six ways.

First, most of them claim that schools are failing. This is simplistic, which is why it is so easy both to substantiate and to falsify. Individual schools differ. Each school produces vastly differing results for different students. Individual schools even differ significantly from year-to-year in the effectiveness with which they can and do fulfill the various functions assigned to them. All this makes it difficult to generalize accurately with respect to a single school's performance in relation to all its students for a single year — let alone to make sweeping pronouncements about schools in general.

Second, some of the major reports slight or ignore the dramatic expansion of school duties during the last twenty-five years and the consequent enlargement of mission that now overwhelms schools. Accordingly, the reports beg the question of what schools are for and how to judge them. There is a tendency among some of the reports, and the responses they have inspired, to judge schools as good or bad primarily on the basis of student performance on standardized tests of

academic achievement. Indeed, the current clamor over the schools rests almost exclusively on such test performance. These tests emphasize the academic mission of the school. Even if they did so adequately, and the evidence suggests they do not, they fail entirely to address the school's performance in relation to numerous other purposes schools are expected to fulfill.

"A test score seemingly has become more valuable and marketable than the education it represents."

Mary E. Dilworth,
Teachers' Totter

Consider some, *only some* of the tasks assigned to the public school. Schools are used to:

- Teach reading, writing, arithmetic, the humanities, and the arts and sciences.
- Enhance certain kinds of cognitive functioning—mathematical reasoning, scientific reasoning characteristic of the "hard" sciences, and reasoning appropriate to the social sciences.
- Train carpenters, auto mechanics, tool and dye makers, secretaries, computer programmers, a host of diverse clerical workers, athletes, homemakers, marriage and sexual partners, and parents.
- Americanize immigrants.
- Instill certain values and moral codes.
- Perpetuate particular beliefs and myths.
- Instill patriotism and good citizenship behavior.
- Delay the entry of youth into the labor market.
- Serve as custodians of children and youth during certain hours of the day.
- Teach children and youth to be industrious, conscientious, reliable, alert, self-controlled, open-minded, competitive, cooperative, efficient, and attentive.
- Help to desegregate society.
- Eliminate our traditional habit of isolating the handicapped and the elderly.
- Teach children and youth how to handle stress and its consequences.
- Help students to become wise consumers of society's products and goods.
- Battle drug abuse.
- Eliminate poor health and nutritional habits.

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- Instruct about the dangers of nuclear armament and the horrors of nuclear war.
- Provide hot breakfasts, hot lunches, playgrounds, recreation, psychological testing and counseling, and all kinds of other services aimed at the welfare of youth and the amelioration or elimination of social problems.

The point of such a listing is not to expose the multiplicity of functions as ill-advised. Good arguments have been adduced for each of these functions. Furthermore, a strong case can be made for them collectively, that is, for the maintenance of a broadly based institution in our society that for a period touches all our lives. But the range and diversity of the functions schools are expected to perform render questionable any judgments of total performance on the basis of a single function.

A third failing of a number of the reports and their prescriptions is that they use neither logic nor evidence to demonstrate the effects their proposals might yield. Such recommendations as lengthening the school day or year are offered without warrant. Grounded in an instrumental conception of education and dominated by currently perceived needs, the reports look to schools to solve our economic problems, reduce the crime rate, and to satisfy our defense needs. Most of them urge the repetition of past unsuccessful strategies for reforming schools, such as a return to the basics, increasing graduation requirements and a "get tough" attitude. They ignore the lessons of history and research on school improvement. History well documents that schools are not improved by merely adding on to the curriculum or by insisting on higher standards and tougher enforcement. Most importantly, history and research warn us that few organizations are improved as a consequence of coercion from without. Thus, at a time when public confidence appears at lowest ebb, the reports and their prescriptions risk and invite further disappointment.

Fourth, many of the reports slight forces which link educational success to social and economic class, race, ethnicity, and gender. Consequently, some of their remedies for improvement will prove impossible for many students, while exacerbating problems associated with school failure and drop-out rates.

"The most glaring omission from the new studies of the shortcomings of education and recommendations for reform is any detailed estimate of attendant costs and how they are to be met."

Harold Howe,
Phi Delta Kappan,
November, 1983

Fifth, the reports tend to isolate schools from their policy environment. Many of the reports call for expensive innovations without identifying new funding sources or even acknowledging the difficulties posed by variations in taxable wealth among the states and among the districts within a state. Some reports chastise teachers for not upholding academic standards and ignore the key roles played by school boards, state departments of education, colleges and universities, textbook publishers, test makers, and state legislatures in

establishing the conditions for educational excellence.

Finally, and most unfortunate, some of the reports and recommendations are presented with scant attention to matters of educational purpose. They offer no vision, no anchoring goals to direct schooling in America.

Our people have a right to expect better.

They have a right to know how to judge schools fairly. They have a right to know who shall be held accountable. They have a right to expect that schools demonstrate why and to what effect they function and are pressed to improve. Americans have a right to know what schools are for!

In addition to the failures of some of the reports, and the risks of reflexive response to hackneyed strategies for improvement, consider just a sampling of those aspects of today's world which show the need for reappraisal of what we want and can expect of schools.

Consider first the relation of schools to the economy. The American people have been led to hold school failure responsible for our loss of advantage in international markets and our general economic decline. Yet such causation is by no means clear. Indeed, numerous explanations for our economic predicament exclude schools altogether, e.g., the theories that our decline represents a technological crisis due to short-term profit extraction in the 70's in preference to investment in plant and equipment; or that the decline is due to supply-side economics; or that it is the consequence of high deficits and runaway inflation which began with the Vietnam War and are continued in present defense and armament policy. The point here is not to set the record straight, or to take on the vast problem of economic causation. It is merely to suggest that analysts who have sought to deal with the problem are by no means agreed that school failure is the culprit we have been told.

"Few seem inclined to question the notion that schools are responsible for the many failures of General Motors, or Ford, or Chrysler. It is odd, since schools never were praised for causing earlier successes in that industry."

David Cohen,
Harvard Educational Review,
February, 1984

Nor is it clear that any amount of school improvement can resolve the problems of our economic system. Entertain for a moment the fantasy of complete school success for all youth, with all graduating as honor students upon completion of the curricular changes we are now adopting in the name of excellence. Will there be jobs for all of these young people? Present and projected labor needs show that there will not. What is more, the jobs that will be expanding and available for the next several decades stand to make few intellectual demands on those who fill them. And it may even be that more schooling of the sort prescribed by most reports is maladaptive for such work. According to some evidence, academic study ill fits people for routinized or otherwise unchallenging jobs.

Finally, and whatever the connection between public schooling and the economy, school reform *alone* cannot enhance economic

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productivity unless it is matched by reforms in economic institutions. It may be appropriate to ask that schools help to improve the work force by ensuring that students develop those skills and acquire the knowledge appropriate to such productivity. However, given the goal of increasing productivity, it is also appropriate to consider changes in the nature of the workplace, for example, and of the opportunity structures attendant to it.

If school failure may not have *caused* our economic problems, and school perfection alone might not *cure* them, the economic justification of schooling requires examination. The *social* reasons for maintaining public schools, society's stake in education, have stressed the political and the economic. If economic interests would require and justify only very limited schooling, then what, if anything, makes it a matter of public benefit to supply more? We think there are ample reasons for an affirmative reply. The point here is simply that the question needs addressing.

"None of the reports gives due attention to qualities we might wish to develop in young people for their lives outside the marketplace and the university . . . the reports proceed as if no other qualities really need attention."

Eleanor Duckworth,
Harvard Educational Review,
February, 1984

Consider also the predicament of today's young people. They may be among the first generation we have had to prepare for fewer rewards than their parents earned. A number of their parents' values may not prove easily applicable to the adult world they will enter. It is not certain that the economy can sustain them; the social fabric becomes less and less secure; the threat of nuclear annihilation grows increasingly pervasive. Small wonder that young people have retreated from social concern and altruistic goals into narrower and more private life purposes. "Wealth Tops List of College Freshmen's Ambitions" proclaimed one headline. Now surely, if education is life-related at all, if it has a bearing on the kind of world we seek and the kind our actions jointly sustain, these circumstances suggest directions for schools. Since schools help initiate youngsters into a moral order, and that is a significant part of what we mean by becoming educated, it is important to ask about the moral order we want to prepare them for.

Look for a moment at our stunning distrust of the public sphere, at the widespread lack of confidence in government and industry, and at the decreasing numbers of citizens who exercise their right to vote. Consider a world in which it is relevant for states to enact laws *requiring* one human being to aid another in an emergency. Surely such circumstances recommend mandates for the civic education schools provide, mandates other and different from those which the circumstances of fifty years ago, or even twenty years ago might have recommended.

"The new litany of 'toughness' will produce neither excellence nor equity . . . It won't alter the connection between social class and school achievement, beat the Russians and Japanese, nor eliminate unemployment."

Deborah Meier,
"Getting Tough in the Schools"

Consider, too, the public anger with which many have responded to the failure of individuals and groups to live up to norms and aspirations established for but not always by them. The resulting punitive orientation amounts to sheer meanness: meanness toward minorities,

toward non-achieving students, toward the unemployed. Then look, finally, at the call to "excellence" in education. It is a good call. Perhaps a dedication to excellence can help us reverse some of the negative directions into which we have drifted. But success will surely depend on how we understand excellence and the ways we set out to pursue it. Moreover, such pursuit must acknowledge that a wide chasm separates excellence from the adequacy or minimum competence goals of business as usual.

A growing array of evidence testifies to the ways in which we can encourage remarkable performance on the part of human beings. It points to practices and arrangements quite different from those prescribed in a number of the reports. It is the purpose of this document to sketch them, most particularly those strategies which seem currently most overlooked in our search for excellence. The pages which follow are dedicated to the task of opening the discussion about kinds of excellence to be sought and how to win them.

"Core management practices in . . . excellent companies aren't just different. They set conventional management wisdom on its ear."

Thomas Peters and
Robert Waterman,
In Search of Excellence

TWO

THE CHALLENGE OF PURPOSE

The purposes of the public school tend to be unarticulated and to exist *ad hoc*, the residue of changes induced by periodic shifts in public preference. Since the early 1950's, in just three decades, public schools have been through no fewer than four different eras of criticism and reform, each pulling the school toward purposes different from, sometimes at odds with the purposes of others.

"One of the major reasons for the calls of crisis in American education is the shifting expectations of the American public."

Harry Passow
Phi Delta Kappan,
June, 1984

The first era, the early 1950's, was dominated by a "back to basics" purpose intended to rescind school practices of an earlier period. The second era, launched by Sputnik in 1957, was dominated by math and science innovations which pushed schools in directions different from those of the early 1950's. "Excellence" became our mission then also. The third period, beginning in the mid 1960's, brought a brand of humanism and a social consciousness which centered the school in social reform, while seeking to eradicate the practices of the 1950's. With this new orientation, school functions were expanded dramatically. Now in the fourth era, begun in the mid-1970's, we are witnessing a return to the earlier 1950's sort of reforms.

Schools respond as dominant interests demand. More often than not the changes are piecemeal and additive, rather than thoroughgoing. Add-ons to the curriculum surface here and there as part of each new reform cycle. New requirements are invoked and new options made available. New support services are developed and delivered. New school professions are created. Programs which educate school professionals expand accordingly. Because each of these developments represents a constituency, little, if anything, is eliminated. The consequence is a continuing, evolving expansion of school functions and responsibilities, and a mounting confusion of purpose for schools and their critics alike.

Beyond the problems posed by additive reform, another of a different order stems from the way we perceive purpose itself. Schools have always served two logically different types of purpose for people, two distinct orders of intention. The first relates to educational goals as end-states or outcomes to be achieved by students and is the more familiar of the two. Here, school purposes are construed as goals like learning to read or knowing about the Civil War or being able to solve algebraic problems at certain levels of intricacy. These kinds of goals or purposes are the sort whose attainment is demonstrated through student performance on standardized tests of academic achievement.

The second kind of purposes we want schools to meet are of quite a different sort. They have to do not with outcomes, but with circumstances along the way, with particular experiences we want youngsters to undergo and with the qualities we want to see reflected in the arrangements and processes the school administers.

Although very prominent in the way Americans feel about schools, this second kind of educational purpose is less understood and discussed than the first. We can all readily understand educational goals as desired outcomes to be achieved. The concept of educational purposes as exposure to particular qualities of experience is more elusive. It addresses not only what one does in school, but the spirit in which it is done, what it means to participants, and priorities to be applied in judging it. When people ask that schools reflect order or discipline or civility or compassion — or excellence — they are enunciating this second kind of educational purpose.

We err in overlooking either of these two types of goals. Both are important to good schools and both are important to public approval of schools. Neither can be reduced to the other, although different eras may seem to try. For example, most current improvement plans call almost exclusively for measurable results, more credits in math and science or higher standardized test scores. In the 1960's, many of the reform designs sought to suffuse schools with humanistic qualities of experiences. Two decades later, increased concern with schools' livability and responsiveness is very much needed. Neither sort of purpose ought to be sacrificed to the other. We do not want "nice" school experiences which lead nowhere and produce little learning; neither, however, do we want pedagogically efficient activities which are physically, psychologically, or morally injurious to children.

The need is now great to identify the necessary and appropriate contributions of the school to the individual and to society. A sense of central and directive purpose is necessary to such a task. Otherwise, it is impossible to decide what schools are supposed to do, unfair to evaluate and judge their performance, difficult to hold their personnel accountable, foolhardy to educate professionals to staff them, and illusory to initiate reforms. *Accordingly, the articulation of an overall purpose for the public school is the most important educational challenge of the day.*

"High schools lack a clear and vital mission. They are unable to find common purposes or establish educational priorities that are widely shared. They seem unable to put it all together. The institution is adrift."

Ernest Boyer,
High School

Purpose must not evolve and endure *ad hoc*. That, we have seen, leads to disaster. Purpose must be framed by principles which derive from values and ideals central to the public that supports and consumes schooling. In the United States, democracy is the most important among all the possible philosophical and political sources from which public school purpose can be derived. American public schools have not always satisfied democracy's needs nor aided fully in the realization

of its promise. But surely past lapses cannot absolve schools of responsibility for continually and aggressively pursuing the goals of democracy. After all, American public schooling was born out of democracy, and without it our democracy is inconceivable.

"Many of the recent reports . . . give one the feeling that children and youths in schools are mere receptacles into which information and skills can be dumped, so that the graduates of our system will be useful to society."

Harold Howe,
Phi Delta Kappan,
November, 1983

American democracy's major goal is to encourage and support individuals in becoming the best persons they are capable of becoming. This goal derives from those central tenets of democracy most pertinent to education. These include:

- freedom to be an individual, to dissent, to grow and to pursue one's own dreams are inalienable human rights.
- human capacities and freedoms are realizable in a society which seeks to protect and nourish them.
- humans have the capacity to devise institutions which honor the equal rights of all.
- a society which nourishes and protects human capacities and freedoms depends upon individual commitment to responsible participation in it.
- humans have the capacity to learn from and to improve themselves as a result of experience.
- it is both possible and morally obligatory to think for oneself.

From these tenets derive several commitments: to individual autonomy; to tested knowledge and experience in preference to the edict of vested authority; to earned, not inherited, social position; to individual dignity and personal liberty; and to responsible citizenship. A society founded on these principles and beliefs must sustain institutions which ensure the development of valued human capacities, the primacy of the individual, and a consensual commitment to democracy and to its way of life. Hence, public schooling.

In contrast to the "manpower-needs view of educational excellence," some reports "urge that the purpose of education be to liberate students from the biases of culture so that they can challenge the imperatives of high technology, not defer to them."

Robert Nash
and Edward Ducharme,
Journal of Teacher Education,
July-August, 1983

The commitments of democracy suggest a number of directions for public schools. Freedom to be an individual, to realize personal autonomy, to develop and exercise one's capacities, to grow and pursue one's dreams, to develop one's distinct identity, to relate responsibly to others, and to exercise responsible citizenship — all of these speak to the need for cultivating individuality. None of this denies the need for extensive commonality. It does not mean that schooling must or can satisfy *all* of the needs and develop *all* of the capacities unique to each student. Nor can schooling be left simply as a matter of personal preference. Indeed, many of the skills and learnings important to realizing individual potential are acquisitions important for all. Also, the importance of shared knowledge and values, relatedness and concern for others, and the exercise of responsible citizenship reveal the

imperative need for some commonality, some shared attributes of the schooling experience.

Moreover, a democratic commitment demands a pedagogy which does more than effectively transmit the cultural heritage, extant bodies of knowledge, or vocational skills. It must teach students how to think, how to order their own affairs rationally, how to function as competent citizens and how to accept, value, and respect others. It must develop the exercise of those capacities central to understanding one's own interests, those of others, and how to effect decisions.

It is not only our socio-political commitments which must undergird American education. What we know about the development of individual human beings must also play a formative role in the shaping of educational purpose.

"The assumption that the contours of adolescent experience can constrain or facilitate adult development is central to most psychologists' discussions of adolescence."

John Mergendoller, "To Facilitate or Impede?"

All people need to acquire and exercise those *cognitive capacities* associated with understanding. The ability to extract data from experience — from vicarious experience such as books, or from direct experience — is acquired fairly early in life. The more sophisticated intellectual processes — the ability to reflect on, to interpret, and to analyze the data one has acquired — appear to depend even more on specific cultivation. These more intricate intellectual skills do not emerge naturally or automatically simply as a product of human growth. The school must deliberately foster them or trust that some other institution will. The evidence suggests that only half our population is arriving at the full set of adult intellectual capacities that should become available to all during adolescence. If the school is to equip all young people to understand and respond appropriately to the practical challenge of managing their own lives, it must concentrate on the development and expansion of intellectual capacity. Thus, curricula, policy, and practice in schools must be prominently associated with cognitive development.

Establishing an *identity*, and an awareness of that identity, is also a fundamental task of human development. It is during adolescence that one's sense of self is likely to take near final shape. This is a matter of both personality and character formation. One's personal vision of the world, which frames the individual as a moral actor, tends to become set during the years that mark schooling. At this stage young adults should arrive at a realistic sense of what they are, want, and need, what they are obligated to, and what their prospects are. The sense of self thus forged will subsequently serve as the individual's personal criterion for decisions and life choices. If they have a stake in what individuals become, schools cannot try to evade responsibility for helping youngsters achieve and accommodate to a realistic sense of who they are. Curricula, policies, and practice should all reflect the major contribution of the school to this particular aspect of development.

One's essential *relatedness* to other human beings is another crucial phase of development fairly well completed by the entrance to young adulthood. The success with which this dimension of growing up is accomplished will determine not only the individual's capacity for forming close personal associations; it will also govern his or her sense of connectedness to other human beings. This has become one of the most serious challenges of our time. There are few individual achievements more important to the survival of our way of life, perhaps, indeed, to *any* way of life, than a cultivated sense of connectedness to other human beings. It is the absence of just such a sense which is reflected in the most brutal of adolescent crimes; and on a larger scale, it is the absence of such a sense that enables mature adults to entertain serenely the possibility of surviving global nuclear war. Formal education has a vital part to play in the development of the emerging adult's relatedness to other human beings. Fulfillment of that role constitutes a major function of the school.

A final task of growing up which deserves serious attention in schools is the challenge of helping individuals to establish themselves as *autonomous human beings*. It involves the development of an individual sense of appropriate behavior, and the deliberate cultivation of judgment. It is unreasonable to expect school graduates to behave responsibly unless they have learned to exercise the judgment that yields such behavior and to practice the examining and choosing of alternative courses of action. Regrettably, the ability to make wise decisions is not an automatic developmental accomplishment. If we want adults who can arrive at and execute informed decisions, the ability to do so must be systematically nurtured and tried out. If we want adults who can outgrow the bonds of their own personal dependency, and who are capable of the freedom a democratic society expects them to exercise, the school must explicitly concern itself with the development of individual autonomy.

"Schools impede development if they confine student thought... obstruct adolescents from recognizing and examining their preferences, hopes, capabilities . . . prevent the formation of the social bonds cemented by common effort, and restrict self-directed actions and participatory governance."

John Mergendoller, "To Facilitate or Impede?"

Clearly, there are numerous other developmental tasks which human beings must accomplish. The development of cognitive power, identity, relatedness, and autonomy are, however, the most central to the school's purpose. Two fundamentally important characteristics must be noted about these four tasks. The first is that they constitute a set. Consider the connection between the development of cognitive ability and individual identity, relatedness, and autonomy: human intelligence is the connecting thread. Cultivation of the individual's ability as meaning-maker, analyst, and synthesizer makes possible the self-consciousness to explore and articulate an identity; generates the awareness of others that permits the role shift that is identification with other human beings; and facilitates the deliberation that is the core of genuine autonomy. Thus it appears that the cultivation of intelligence

is a cornerstone or common denominator of these four key developmental tasks.

The second characteristic to be noted about these four dimensions of maturation is that they complement those central tenets of democracy identified earlier. The pride of the democratic tradition is that it need force no choice in principle between the interests of the individual and those of society. It seeks to serve *both* and to serve the one *by* serving the other. It is the sense of just this mutuality of individual and social interest which is perhaps one of the greatest losses of the late 20th century. The school could do much to restore it, as both faith and reality, and indeed, this should be a central part of public education's mission.

"The most serious misconception in the . . . report[s] is that the basic purpose of education is to train workers for American business."

Joan Lawson
Boston Glove,
October 15, 1983

Both individual interests and the nation's most fundamental commitments recommend that the school's primary purpose be the development of intellectual power. This transcending goal must infuse the culture of the school. It must be translated into curricula which acknowledge that student performance below certain levels of literacy means lifelong disadvantage, that skill acquisition below certain levels means limited opportunities and mortgaged futures. It must be reflected in the way schools are organized and the way in which *all* people therein are treated. It must also suffuse the content and the activities through which schools seek to carry out the several quite different functions parents want them to fulfill:

- *academic* functions, which address the transmission and creation of knowledge and the acquisition of intellectual skills;
- *social/civic* functions, which address preparation for responsible citizenship and participation in society;
- *personal* functions, which address the development of responsible individuality, creativity and freedom of expression; and
- *vocational* functions, which address preparation for productive work and economic self-sufficiency.

John Goodlad found parents to want schools to fulfill all four of these sets of functions, with no more than half being willing to agree on any one of them as primary. As Goodlad concluded, the American public "wants it all." Given the demands life imposes on each of us, such expectations make sense. It is possible, however, and necessary, to find a connecting thread to permeate our treatment and guide our approach to all of them. We find that thread in the unifying purpose of contributing to human fulfillment by enriching and strengthening the intellectual power of our children and young people.

THREE

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR OUTSTANDING SCHOOLS

We speak often of excellence today, as an ideal for schools to emulate. The most discussed of the recent education reports link the term to standards, discipline codes, curricular requirements, and insurance against teacher judgments. Apparently, some people think we can "teacher-proof" classrooms. Few acknowledge that a school's chances for achieving excellence — its excellence potential — is very much a matter of its organization and procedures. These determine the kind of overall environment the school constitutes, which, in turn, determines whether *excellence* will be a value prominently projected, or whether mere *minimal competence* will set an apathetic tone, and the most extensive sharing may be relief at the sound of the last bell.

"The ambience of each school differs. These differences appear to have more to do with the quality of life and, indeed, the quality of education in schools than do the explicit curriculum and the methods of teaching."

John Goodlad,
A Place Called School

Excellence cannot be mandated. It cannot be imposed on any institution, nor can its participants be coerced into pursuing it. Excellence emerges as a quality of the particular goals and norms chosen, the understandings and expectations created and shared by a group of people. It is the commitments of the participants which is the key. More precisely, institutional excellence is not so much a matter of individual values, as of norms participants share, norms which define the crucially important climate or ethos, the moral order, of a school. *The excellence challenge then is a matter of generating an environment conducive to a shared commitment to excellence.*

There is evidence as to how to create such a school climate, but two major obstacles have limited its pursuit in schools. One is the long-standing reliance on rules and regulations, on rationalistic, top-down formal systems and policies as the surest route to fulfilling the aims of public institutions: the control of conduct, in preference to the development and reliance on commitments. The second obstacle to school climates generative of excellence is the assumption that educational improvement rests in increasingly detailed and precise specification of school practice related to curriculum, time allotments, standards, professional specialization, and roles and responsibilities.

"Teaching often lacks a sense of ownership, a sense among the teachers working together that the school is theirs, and that its future and their reputation are indistinguishable. Hired hands own nothing, and are told what to do, and have little stake in their enterprises . . . Not surprisingly . . . [teachers] . . . often act like hired hands."

Theodore Sizer,
Horace's Compromise

Both tendencies fly in the face of what we know about successful schools, and about excellence in other types of organizations as well. In fact, the general strategy being adopted by most of the education reports, and being implemented now in a growing number of states, may be distinctly *opposed* to excellence.

If we would have excellence, we must look toward school

organization that generates greater efficacy on the part of teachers, the crucial figures in the drama. What is needed has variously been called "responsible autonomy," "collective autonomy," "strategic independence." There are critical reasons why we must assign teachers more responsibility and concomitant authority.

A first reason is that unless people posess a sense of efficacy — the power to produce desired effects — it is hopeless to expect them to assume responsibility for improving their own performance. Unless teachers can feel their efforts matter, what would be the sense in struggling to improve? To the extent that teachers' behavior is externally controlled, that it is circumscribed by others' policies and teacher-proof technologies, we limit not only their power and prerogatives, but their psychological ownership of the effects of their actions.

Efficacy is also essential to teachers' professional satisfaction, morale, and ultimately to their performance. It is absurd to bemoan how the ablest people are unattracted to teaching, or leave it quickly, while ignoring the causes of teacher dissatisfaction. We know that a sense of potency, of knowing one's efforts count, are powerful performance incentives and crucial factors in the sense of pride and accomplishment in one's work. We must seek ways to rekindle this sense among the teachers who have lost it.

There is finally a third undergirding reason why increased teacher efficacy is essential to educational improvement. It stems from the nature of teaching itself. In the nature of the case, teaching must be so extensively guided by judgments about immediate events and interactions that to be limited to pre-specified mandates and constraints is almost certainly to weaken performance and to guarantee an outcome inferior to what discretionary authority would produce. The essential message of teacher-proof methodologies is that subject matter, process, and learners must be protected from teacher intelligence and judgment. It is not simply that we would do well to keep teachers happy or that they will be more productive if we do so. The very nature of teaching calls for substantial teacher authority.

"Research on teacher effectiveness lends more support to a . . . view of . . . teacher behavior in which judgment plays a large role than to a view that presumes that specific teaching techniques or behaviors can be uniformly applied."

Linda Darling-Hammond and Arthur Wise,
"Beyond Standardization . . ."

How do we render such authority compatible with the school's responsibility to students, parents, and the public at large? One reasonable accountability measure is surely the responses of those involved: the feelings of students and their parents about the school attended and about themselves in relation to that school. Schools ought to be accountable to their clients in terms of whether students experience a sense of accomplishment in their work and are able to take pride in it. Students and their parents are probably the best judges of a school's livability, its life-affirming capacities. But the whole society has a stake in the extent to which schools make good on their promises to

promote learning. Assuming such purposes are stated as they ought to be, schools should be in a position to account individually to the public on their success.

How ought goals be stated? They should be framed in terms of concepts, understandings, and general skills, rather than as particular content to be mastered. For instance, one set of social studies goals might desirably be framed in terms of an understanding of such concepts as balance of power, imperialism, colonization, rebellion and revolution, exploitation and oppression. Precisely which content might best yield these understandings at ideal depth and range for a particular group is best left to teachers because they know the students. They are in the best position to determine what content will work best at a given time in relation to particular goals; how it might be organized to greatest advantage; and what instructional activities should prove most successful.

"An effective school is . . . accountable to the state for such basic outcomes as literacy in language and numbers, but free to innovate in materials and methods . . ."

Doxey Wilkerson, *Educating All Our Children*

It is quite appropriate to ask each school to accept a common set of concepts as its goal, concepts determined by the district and/or the state. It is also reasonable to hold each school accountable for these goals and for devising ways to document its students' success for the public. This will prove a challenge, since most of the standardized tests commonly used to document learning are curriculum-specific. They do not test concept mastery, but retention of the specific facts taught. Such a challenge could obviously bring other benefits as well as improved school accountability. Most notably, it could help shift instructional attention from the recall kinds of learnings which are easiest to test, to the more demanding sorts of learnings that are more important to know — which is exactly what happens in outstanding schools.

There is also a third kind of accountability which must go hand in hand with the increased teacher autonomy necessary to improving schools. That is a system in which teachers who feel accountable for their schools are actively engaged in peer review activities. Recent studies of schools and other institutions in which staff must continually make discretionary decisions urge that only by linking autonomy and peer review can reformers enhance, instead of undermine, the activity they seek to improve.

Decentralized authority would give schools more responsibility for their own practice. A new element of control would issue from the collective responsibility of all staff for a school and the quality of its operation. Although these three types of accountability are not yet fully developed, they offer far more potential for holding schools responsible to the public than do such strategies as externally imposed curricula and testing, since these serve to *impoverish the practice* being controlled.

Educational excellence calls also for another fundamental change in

typical school arrangements: for a great deal more team effort and collegiality. Observers have commented about the essential loneliness of the teacher, the isolation in which his or her work is typically planned and executed. As research has underscored, good schools depend upon a positive *shared* ethos in which colleagues are respected and student well-being and learning are central. Collaborative planning, extensive interaction, and interdependence are essential to improving educational practice. Only as a team consciousness develops can a positive ethos emerge and exert a significant claim on all staff. Collegiality can produce the coherence good schools require, and a vitality far beyond the reach of formalistic rules. In different words: In any undertaking, such as a school, where success depends on a substantial degree of autonomy, a shared ethos provides the cohesion needed to sustain individual effort.

"People who are constantly engaged in planning for group practice, who have some control over their work processes, and who regard clients not as units to be processed but as people, will discover the rewards of doing a good job gratifying and renewing."

Michael Lipsky,
Street-Level Bureaucracy

A great many beneficial changes would flow from the two major organizational proposals presented thus far — increased professional efficacy and collegiality. Perhaps there is just one more idea of comparable power in building school excellence. We need to make schools into what computer lingo would dub "user friendly" institutions. All who enter it should experience the school as a concerned, responsive, supportive environment. Our interest in education's outcomes sometimes leaves us indifferent to what school means and feels like to the young people and adults who work within it. Yet, as several of the recent studies have suggested, this is probably the single most important feature of a school for those who inhabit it daily. It is strongly determinative of the quantity and quality of their efforts and of the nature of their learnings. Thus, instead of trying to make schools places of stern discipline and adult-regulated order as some suggest, ways should be sought to make them more relaxed and, yes, places of enjoyment, challenge, and excitement.

A warning seems important here in the interests of clarity. Educational excellence requires more than a warm and friendly place to be. It demands challenge, sets high expectations, invigorates, assesses performance, and holds individuals accountable. Thus to call for responsiveness is *not* to say that schools should be amusement palaces or that youngsters' interest ought to dictate what or whether they will learn. It is, however, to acknowledge what business and industry have long recognized about human beings. They work better when they are motivated, and a sense of pleasure, excitement, and ownership in the enterprise are strong motivators. Without making responsiveness the deciding factor by any means, there is much schools can do to make learning more attractive and rewarding from the student's perspective. Any school that is serious about eliciting excellence from youngsters must be willing to make this a consideration in planning such diverse matters as scheduling, student support services, curricular content and

"The excellence companies . . . create environments in which people can blossom, develop self-esteem, and otherwise be excited participants . . . Meanwhile, in . . . nonexcellent . . . [organizations] . . . losing instead of winning is the norm, as are negative . . . reinforcement . . . constraint and control."

Thomas Peters and
Robert Waterman,
In Search of Excellence

organization, community relations, and learning activities.

The three attributes named — efficacy, collegiality, and user friendliness — are certainly not exhaustive of the qualities which school organization should reflect. But they are perhaps the currently most overlooked requisites of durable, successful school improvement. They satisfy some basic human desires for community, belonging and interdependence, engagement in creating and sustaining a commonly valued enterprise, and assurance that one's efforts count and one's interests and concerns matter.

If the above considerations were taken seriously in the design of school structure and operations, here are some of the many features that would appear:

- Schools would be small in size or large ones would be divided into small, independently functioning units to permit considerable personalization.
- Schools and schools-within-schools would be engaged in considerably more decision-making than individual units now undertake.
- Site management, budgetary development and budgetary control would be taken seriously at the local school level.
- Schools and schools-within-schools would be encouraged to cultivate their own distinctive climates, to innovate, and to differ from others in the particular way they pursue curricular goals.
- Both staff and student time would be invested in deliberate, conscious effort to maintain the ethos or moral order of the school.
- Parents would be welcome in schools as respected clients, as allies, and as irreplaceable sources of help in the effort to educate their children.
- Principals would encourage and make time for a great deal of staff communication and interaction, both within and outside the school day.
- Teams of teachers would together work out solutions to the perennial challenges of teaching — content and its arrangement, instructional activities, classroom order.
- Teachers would have opportunity to select their school of assignment, in the interests of dovetailing the educational orientation of individual and institution.

"The most important thing about school for the children and youth who go there is the living out of their daily personal and social lives, not academics."

John Goodlad,
A Place Called School

- School staff would exert collective responsibility for the selection and retention of teachers.
- Schools would work more like institutions trying to respond to and serve a clientele than like organizations set on adapting the clients to the institution.
- Schools would differ as to how much power students exert in school decision-making – because educators differ over that, and because student needs and capacities differ.
- In all schools, students would recognize that their interests, concerns, and welfare were an important consideration in determining the way things are.

Does it all sound utopian and risky? Perhaps to some. But in fact the contrary is the case. Arrangements like those described are exactly what studies of excellence have discovered in the most successful institutions, outstanding schools as well as corporations.

Excellence emerges, or fails to emerge, in individual schools. If we cannot empower them to pursue this mission, our talk of excellence will remain only that. The current seekers of educational excellence all too often appear engaged not really with pursuing excellence but with containing incompetence. It is a fruitless struggle. For not only is such a strategy bound to fail *vis-a-vis* the incompetent; it is likely to render the highly competent less so. If we would have excellence, the policy makers who sit at national, state, and even district levels must reconcile themselves to enunciating broad, lucid goals, creating incentives for their pursuit, and granting individual schools flexibility in achieving them.

"Policies that prescribe . . . in very detailed, specific, and myopic ways . . . and that establish a precedent for decision-making on school policy outside of the school and community, will be ultimately self-defeating."

Carolyn D. Wyatt
Harvard Educational Review,
February, 1984

There is to be sure the problem of resources. Schools located in districts that are unable or unwilling to provide adequate funding may be dubious about the benefits of such flexibility. They may in fact eagerly sacrifice professional latitude to purchase state or federal supports. Moreover, several states have a commitment, and in some cases a constitutional mandate, to guarantee the distribution of comparable resources among the school districts within their jurisdictions. Without denying the legitimate economic and other concerns of state government for achieving educational excellence and equity, we fear state efforts can be misdirected. Education policy makers at all levels serve the cause of better schools by keeping the ultimate purpose of education firmly in mind. In all cases, the aim should be the opposite of regulation or the enlargement of administrative and policy making structures. The point rather is to guarantee that individual schools have access to qualified staff, curriculum resources, and adequate funding, the basic supports they

need to promote learning for their particular students. In short, those at the upper levels of educational systems should act as enablers for those directly responsible for the work of the schools. Successful superintendents and local and state policy makers around the country have been doing precisely that for some time.

FOUR

GENERATING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

If we want public schools to enhance students' intellectual power, particular kinds and modes of learning must be promoted. If we seek livable schools, as well as cognitive development, certain varieties of school experiences must be made possible. If we want schools to be user friendly institutions that enlist young people in the quest for excellence, our approaches to curriculum and instruction must take students themselves into account.

It is difficult to review the 20 or so major national reports on schools without noting a remarkable omission. Most are strangely silent on precisely how teachers are to accomplish the excellence mission. They imply by this silence that the *mandating* of curriculum and of achievement levels will suffice, that determined teachers will simply demand the appropriate performance and that students will comply. For those who know classrooms, such a scenario is hard to accept. Teachers' demands sometimes get as short shrift as parents' demands. Dropout rates offer dramatic demonstration of youthful unwillingness to deal with what is not pleasant. Thus, how to engage preoccupied, indifferent, or distinctly disinterested youngsters in learning is one of today's most demanding classroom challenges. It is unfortunate that those insisting on superior results have so little to suggest on how to obtain them.

"High school teachers are rarely given credit for their cleverness in generating interest in the subject, yet this is a prerequisite for any kind of learning."

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Reed Larson,
Being Adolescent

Perhaps the most depressing of all of the recent findings about schools has been John Goodlad's documentation of the dull sameness pervading classroom after classroom, in good schools as well as poor ones. Indeed, so similar and pervasive are curricular form and instructional methods that they play small part in school-to-school differences, and in the satisfaction of the participants within a school. It is as though all were reconciled to the idea that learning is monotonously the same, largely a matter of teacher talk and minimal interaction, occurring in classrooms of deadened affect.

If we want excellence in education, we must find ways to activate students and teachers to seek it. Excellence requires schools capable of generating enthusiasm in learning and a sense of satisfaction and accomplishment in educational achievement. For teachers, the sense of efficacy and the collegiality will be powerful factors. And so for students as well. Youngsters also need to experience a sense of efficacy. For them, this means that their efforts will matter, that they have something to say about the objects of those efforts, and that they are

"In courses where there is intellectual adventure, discipline is rarely a problem and time does not drag. Students appear alert, engaged, and responsive."

Sara Lawrence Lightfoot,
The Good High School

enabled to experience success. Without a sense of potency, young people are much less likely to succeed in school or to reflect much interest in doing so.

If we would inspire excellence, increasing the user friendliness of schools is imperative. It is foolish to hope for the kind of commitment and effort excellence exacts if school remains a place where students are force-fed content in which they can find little meaning and which leaves them bored. Learning builds new capabilities. It pushes, prods, and stretches students, but it must begin where they are. User friendly schools will display receptivity, responsiveness, flexibility, respect, support, and caring in relation to the young, although the form these characteristics assume will surely vary.

"The teacher's task is to create an orderly context for learning and to win obedience in such a way that externally imposed constraints eventually become freely chosen internal disciplines."

Gerald Grant,
"The Teacher's Predicament"

The same human desires which make collegiality rewarding and motivating for teachers make peer interaction attractive to youngsters. The sense of community that ensues can be a potent motivator toward excellence. Moreover, a sense of community among students is likely to serve several of education's most central purposes. Most immediately, it will strengthen the school as a total community, supporting a positive ethos and making a dissonant student subculture less likely and appealing. For the long run, a genuine community membership will contribute to intellectual, social, and emotional maturation, and it can serve each of the several major types of school functions: academic, vocational, and personal as well as social/civic.

Force-feeding more pre-selected content is evidently construed by many as the key to educational excellence. Certainly excellence has something to do with what is learned, but curriculum is only one of several excellence-related features of the school. There is much in the world that youngsters need to know and to understand, and the breadth and scope of what seems important is dictated by our varied expectations of schooling. If we are convinced that education can improve the quality both of our individual lives and our collective existence, we must not settle in high schools for vocational education alone for the non-college bound. Nor can we settle for the academic alone for the college-bound.

The importance of having all youngsters pursue all four types of goals calls at least for some choice. Vocational, academic, social/civic, and personal interests *differ*. There is no reason why schools cannot recognize and respond to that fact of life, providing simultaneously for the array of learning important to individual self-realization and for the shared learnings important to society's welfare. The apparent conflict between diversity and commonality is far simpler to resolve than we have made it; but to describe a resolution requires the introduction of several ideas.

First is the idea of distribution requirements. There are different

kinds of knowledge and there are different objects of knowledge. We want youngsters to become acquainted with the array. Thus it makes sense to require that each become familiar with particular forms of literature; the sciences; mathematics; the social sciences or social studies; the fine and performing arts. It seems reasonable to ask that each youngster's high school career include extensive attention to these five areas. Such a requirement, however, need not specify either an organization for the content or a particular method of instruction. Many students prefer traditional formats, but others benefit more from themed courses drawing on several fields of study than from courses separated on a disciplinary basis. Accommodating such differences tends to be discouraged by fixed approaches to curriculum. It seems at least unwise to beg the question of curriculum organization in trying to improve schools by specifying numbers of courses or credits in academic areas.

Knowledge is by no means all that we expect of youth. We want them to acquire skills also, the particular skills involved in reading, thinking, and writing, for example. *And* we want them to come to skills of a somewhat different order: those associated with maturation. To take on the skills which mark Piaget's adult stage of formal thought, for example, is a somewhat different kind of skill acquisition than, say, learning how to type or write a sonnet.

"The process of development from infancy to adulthood is characterized by the expansion of individuals' capabilities for action, thought, and social relationships."

John Mergendoller,
"To Facilitate or Impede?"

Several of the recent reports are appropriately concerned with our poor balance between knowledge and skills. If we keep insisting on the memorization of more facts — which is what the standardized achievement tests are driving teachers to emphasize — there is less time to develop the skills for processing those facts. This is what led Theodore Sizer in his study to counter current trends by flatly asserting that "less is more"; and which led Mortimer Adler to stress the importance of intellectual skills and of genuine understanding; and which led John Goodlad to rue the way in which the back-to-basics movement has reinforced teachers in seeking "the lowest common denominators of teaching." There is extensive agreement among the current studies that this is a serious shortcoming of the schools.

The way in which curricular requirements ought to be written is in terms of the *concepts* we want to teach as knowledge, and the developmental and other *skills* which we want students to acquire. This contrasts with the way in which curriculum is typically specified as *content*, e.g., Modern European History, or Shakespearean Plays, or Earth Science. The problem is that content selection needs to be context-specific. Which content will best contribute to educational advancement at a given point differs from group to group and place to place. If, on the other hand, curricular aims were stated in terms of

"There is no One Best Curriculum for all schools . . . No two schools will or should have precisely the same characteristics; wise diversity is *essential* for quality."

Theodore Sizer,
Horace's Compromise

particular sets of skills and concepts, those best able to do so would be free to determine what content is best calculated to serve those goals. If the concepts to be learned have to do, for example, with forms of poetry, which poems might best display these forms would differ for different groups of students. The teachers of a particular school might often be in the best position to identify that for themselves. This would not always be the case, of course, and undoubtedly less often in some fields of knowledge than in others. But we might arrive at the most educationally effective curricula by making it a rule of thumb to follow this sort of procedure as often as possible, in preference to the detailed specification of content.

This approach to curriculum-making would also render it easier to satisfy another increasingly important need. Demographic projections make it clear that more and more of the youngsters in schools are going to be from economically poor and culturally diverse homes. Careful planning is necessary for these students, if we are to replace the tradition of school failure with that of educational excellence. New content, some re-packaging of more traditional fare, and some deliberate effort to make it responsive to them will be absolutely essential.

We must also learn to see and use the cultural backgrounds of students as educational resources. There is no reason why highly respectable content cannot be assembled in appealing packages for students of all types and at all educational levels. A user friendly school should be committed to trying to do just that.

There are some outstanding successes to look to. One is the Foxfire program which has managed to combine the teaching of writing, journalism, oral history, and the various technical and business features of magazine production. It has even been prominent in the emergence of a new literary genre, cultural journalism. Another program, also a high school class, is a consumer action service which involves students in investigating consumer complaints and attempting to mediate disputes with local businesses and even city offices. Students enrolled have learned a great deal about municipal government, commercial practice, and consumer options, all in contexts they could find meaningful. Still a third involves students in an introductory business course in running their own, small-scale produce business.

These three programs (and many more can be found, and an indefinite number created) share several important features. All involve, draw on, but are not limited to what is fairly traditional curricular fare — writing, grammar, civics, economics, science. All represent somewhat novel packages, assembling knowledge from disciplines which traditional curricular practice separates. All seek to connect to learners' personal and out-of-school experience. All are

constructed so as to involve students actively in learning, in contrast to the passive sitting and listening which, according to Goodlad, dominates classroom after classroom across the nation.

Exactly what would students study? Given the kind of school-to-school flexibility and responsiveness that we have urged so far as *content* is concerned, there is no reason why states and districts cannot mandate distribution requirements for students. This would mean that emphases in science, mathematics, language and literature, social studies, and the arts are specified, along with the skills and concepts to be gained. But the content is not. With no sacrifice in rigor, schools would be left to plan content according to the needs, interests, and maturity levels of their students. Different schools would pursue different content, and desirably there would be choices within a single school of courses representing different ways of delivering a particular set of concepts and skills.

Three additional areas also seem important as curricular requirements: technological study, career awareness, and service. We share the interest of *A Nation At Risk* in helping all young people gain at least minimal computer competency. We also share the criticism of that perspective as too narrow. Students will need not only a how-to-do-it acquaintance with some exemplar of high technology, but also some understanding of its place in society, its impact and potential, and its prospective effect on their lives.

We would propose too that youngsters, while still in school, begin to explore career options and choices. High school graduation tends to function as a career categorizer for students who go on to college as well as for those who do not. Helping all students to explore their interests and to learn something of the real nature of the work to which they are disposed would be an important service to the community as well as to individuals.

Finally, we would like to see all students involved in service learning during their high school years. While we share the rationale for this proposal urged by Ernest Boyer in *High School,* our reasons go beyond the importance of permitting youngsters to become contributing members of their community, important as that is. Service experience, if carefully examined and critiqued by those providing it, can serve as the source of learnings of immeasurable import to young people. We would like to see all students involved in volunteering their services and in being helped in some systematic way to study that experience and to glean as much as possible from it. Young people need opportunities for experiences that illuminate their own lives, while providing them with new perspectives and understandings aimed at transcending private experience. Service learning properly approached and conducted can satisfy this need.

Service learning "will do much to help build a sense of community and common purpose within a school. In the end, the goal of service in the schools is to teach values — to help all students understand that to be fully human one must serve."

Ernest Boyer,
High School

Dropout rates, especially those in our large cities, bear ample testimony to the school's failure to respond to substantial portions of the population. Boyer has estimated that 20-30% of the nation's youngsters are very badly served by the American high school. Particularly in the cities, where half the student population may leave school prior to graduation, the ill fit between student needs and what schools have offered is painfully apparent. Those who think of education largely as a private benefit may see dropouts as the reasonable and acceptable price of maintaining academic standards. Those more attuned to the public as well as the individual costs attached to the dropout phenomenon — the unemployment prospects, the welfare costs, and the associated crime rates — are likely to see it as a severe public as well as a private problem. Our dropout record is simply unacceptable, on humane grounds, on the grounds of our democratic commitments, on the grounds of equity, and on grounds of documentable public interest.

However, it will accomplish little to retain youngsters and put them to repeating work in which they can find little meaning and even less success. The real issue is not unearned promotion versus retention, but how to devise programs of quite different approaches, in which those who have not learned by one means can be provided the opportunity to do so via another. Neither is it acceptable to assign the less able students to tracks which, for them, simply undercut education's promise. Vocational tracks have often proved unsatisfactory in delivering marketable skills, or other sorts of positive learnings, and are all too often used primarily as devices for getting the unwanted out of academic classrooms. The solutions for such students must be sought in programs that intend to further their intellectual and other accomplishments rather than in effect denying the possibility of and the opportunities for such achievement.

What we have found out in the last ten years is that effective learning programs for most children can be constructed . . . The limitations, if any, are not in the children but in our lack of inventiveness in using what we already know about human learning.

Ralph Tyler, in
Educating All Our Children

There are ways to accomplish this. Successful models already exist and can be used in creating the needed programs. For instance, in lieu of vocational schools that prepare youth only for limited and menial roles, some magnet schools have been organized along the lines of whole fields of endeavor. Such a health services magnet may attract prospective doctors and nurses as well as prospective hospital orderlies. Also, there are a number of exemplary programs designed explicitly to enhance intellectual skills, for example, critical thinking and philosophy for children programs. Other notable programs have been effective in remediating intellectual skill development. Our efforts with marginal and disaffected youth need extensive redirection. It is not simply a matter of determining to do things *better;* we are required to do them quite *differently*. Until we acknowledge that and proceed with the considerable change necessary, attempts to impose higher standards will lead to little more than bloated failure rates.

The sorts of curricular approaches already recommended, the content variation and the adoption of programs that can hold student interest, constitute one important strategy in seeking excellence. Another directly addresses teaching methods. We call attention to four matters related to instructional approach that can and should inform efforts to make excellence a reasonable goal for all students.

First, schools need to carry out the message of the familiar adage that "people learn in different ways." Educators say it often enough, yet the way most honor it is only by expecting differences in speed. If people really learn differently, the differences are far more than a matter of pace or rate. Individuals vary in their motivation for learning different things. Given similar experiences, individuals learn different things. Needed are varied instructional approaches that complement and better respond to learning. Required are deliberate attempts to accommodate those who learn best from active doing as well as those who learn best from written or oral expression, and those who need explicit structure for heightened performance as well as those who need the openness to do their own structuring. Schools willing to undertake such efforts will find that excellence is within the grasp of far more students than they had thought.

"Good moods and good grades go together in school . . . It is unfortunate, therefore, that the average student is usually bored, apathetic, and unfriendly to the situation."

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Reed Larson,
Being Adolescent

A second important consideration is to set out to undo all that drab sameness marking American classrooms. Variety is at least as important to sustaining youthful attention as it is to keeping adults engaged. Varying the school week is important, so that Tuesdays are not just like Mondays, and Wednesdays are not simply more of the same. There are many ways to do this. In one outstanding school, for example, Wednesday afternoons are special programs. It may be sitting in on a special session of the United Nations or hearing a visiting local official or expert, but Wednesdays do not replicate the other four afternoons. Another school, this one a middle school, makes Fridays special. There is a special set of Friday courses, representing particular interests of school staff, and each staff member, administrators included, teaches one. The Friday schedule and offerings are like no other day. This particular school also recognizes the importance of variety within each school day, Monday to Thursday. Care is taken to see that within each day, each student does some work alone, in individualized study, and some work in small groups, as well as some in the traditional whole class, teacher-directed arrangement.

If built into school and teacher decisions, the two concerns of responsiveness to student differences and the human need for variety can make a great deal of difference. We want to mention just two more steps which teachers can take to render learning more meaningful and important to students. As earlier suggested, experiential learning is one very powerful arrangement. A growing body of evidence testifies to its

value in the learning of most students, and to its absolute necessity in the learning of some. There are many ways to incorporate experiential learning activities even into the most traditional curricular offerings. One of them, for instance, is peer tutoring, which has been employed in some schools to enormous advantage for all concerned, but most especially for the student tutor who is the action learner. Internships have provided extensive periods of action learning for youngsters in government offices, research laboratories, newspapers, and elsewhere. Independent study courses offer opportunities to pursue comparable sorts of learning on a smaller scale. The introductory business course mentioned above offered opportunities for youngsters to come to understand such fundamental concepts as competition, supply and demand, wholesale and retail, profit and loss, capital, assets and liabilities, and production — all at levels and in ways that a more typical high school course might never have accomplished.

Another approach which can also be applied widely in numerous subject fields is cooperative learning. Several of the recent school studies have noted the extent to which American classrooms represent the conditions of parallel play typical of the three-year-old. Others are present and similarly engaged, but there is little interaction or collaboration. Each pursues essentially the same activity, yet separately and alone. The conditions of most classrooms call for minimal relating, and it is primarily of a competitive or adversarial sort. There are important life lessons and values to be learned, and developmental purposes to be served, as well as major motivational gains to be had, by altering this interaction pattern. To do so would not merely be a matter of indulging the young but of advancing the excellence quest. More small group activity of a cooperative sort would help considerably. Few of today's youngsters will be self-employed; most will have to work in organizations and to collaborate with others. It seems highly reasonable to ask schools to provide this important kind of preparation for the future. The evidence is clear that it yields immediate academic gains. So there appear to be multiple purposes to be served, and gains to be had, from changing the typical interaction patterns in classrooms and employing various modes of cooperative learning as pedagogy.

"Cooperative learning methods . . . consistently increase student achievement . . . in many academic subjects in elementary and secondary classr oms."

Robert E. Slavin
Cooperative Learning

These several considerations will have to be applied differently for students of varying types, ages, and maturity levels. There are numerous and diverse strategies for moving young people to invest deeply in their schools, and in school learning. The means identified here are merely suggestive of the possibilities that will emerge when school professionals, with the support and help of their communities, commit themselves to creating environments from which excellence can emerge. As with teachers, such environments will be created when young people are recognized as desiring and needing community, engagement, and efficacy.

FIVE

EDUCATING TEACHERS FOR EXCELLENCE

American public schools can be regarded as excellent to the extent that they promote learning and foster communities in which students find incentives for intellectual labor. Without toughmindedness education is a joke; without humaneness, it is inert. A third requisite originates within our national traditions. Educational excellence in our country also demands that schools be inclusive in intent and in availability.

Such seemingly contradictory imperatives for excellence require school professionals of great skill and ability. Teachers, counselors, principals, superintendents, and other school professionals must be understood, and must understand themselves, as educators. Directly or indirectly, they mediate learning and the quality of life in a school. Their own education is critically important.

"It is primarily teachers and school administrators who will give us the kind of schools we need, for it is only through what they create that any view of the schools we need will have any chance, whatsoever, of realization."

Elliot Eisner,
"The Kind of Schools We Need"

Most of the recent reports pay scant attention to teacher education and virtually ignore the preparation of other school professionals. Given the general awareness that leadership plays key roles in successful schools, the collective silence on the preparation of administrators, especially superintendents and principals, is astonishing. By contrast, recent research correlates improved schools with stronger professional preparation programs. Also, several comprehensive model program proposals in teacher education have appeared in recent years. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education is redesigning the standards by which colleges and universities can be accredited to offer preparation programs. These several efforts speak with a common voice on the need for dramatic improvements, especially in undergraduate teacher education. It is there that the preparation of all school professionals typically begins.

The objects of complaint about teacher education are legion. The students, for one, tend to score below their peers in other programs on standardized academic achievement tests and to rank comparatively low in their high school graduating classes. In addition, the impression prevails that education majors constitute a passive and generally uninteresting group. They know what they want to become teachers and they expect the college or university to tell them how to get there. Afflicted with career tunnel vision, they tend to be, well, unambitious.

Education faculty fare as poorly in the eyes of their colleagues in the arts and sciences. If they conduct research, it is of the variety that has

little generalizability. More often they are alleged to produce "thought pieces" for undistinguished journals or to ape their more secure colleagues in the "real" disciplines. Educational scholarship is thus faulted as both pretentious and unimportant.

Finally, scorn and derision greet the teacher education programs themselves. They lack meaningful admission standards. Students are said to confront a preponderance of education courses, some arts and sciences courses designed for them alone (Mathematics for Teacher Education Majors), and academic rigor notable mainly by its absence. Looking back, teachers complain that their preparation was too theoretical, while others denounce the tendency to emphasize methods courses at the expense of academic content. The dismal portrait is completed with a final uncomplimentary stroke: competency tests that reveal teachers who have trouble comprehending or writing standard English or negotiating the intricacies of elementary arithmetic.

"Paradoxically . . . current political domination of issues related to teaching may contramand any attempt to . . . improve the instructional services of schools . . . political tinkering with educational matters may prove . . . the enemy . . . of teacher improvement."

Susan J. Rosenholtz, "Political Myths . . ."

Although overstated here, there can be no doubt about the depth of dissatisfaction with teacher education. Given its problems and its reputation, what then would qualify as the dramatic improvement needed? Some proposals would abolish professional teacher education altogether, granting certification to graduates with a major in one of the standard disciplines following a successful apprenticeship of one or more years. Others recommend five or six-year programs that would combine an academic major with pedagogical studies and clinical practice. Still others insist that the key to improvement is to have teacher preparation feature pedagogical study and clinical practice, utilizing the knowledge established by recent research on effective teaching. Almost everyone agrees that admission standards should be higher, academic content should be more rigorous, and ability and competency tests used systematically to weed out less able students.

No one who cares about education can quarrel with the quest for excellence in the preparation of teachers. There is much to object to, however, in the results of the current mad scramble to make changes. While some of the complaints about teacher education have obvious merit, many others are unfair and unthinking. To these we offer some responses:

- Rigorous, high quality teacher education is labor intensive and therefore costly. Teacher education requires funding and institutional commitment commensurate with the demands of excellence.
- State legislatures and school boards must take note of problems they alone can solve. To attract able people, we must ensure professionally rewarding conditions in schools, and we must pay teachers higher salaries. Without such changes, "tough"

admission standards for teacher education amount to nonsense.

- The criticisms of teacher education from arts and sciences faculties ignore the disorder in their own house. Fragmented into subfields and specialized research interests, they have rendered the ideal of liberal education problematic on campuses across the country. Although the fact is not widely known or admitted, they offer the majority of courses currently taken by prospective high school teachers. If high school teachers are ill-prepared and ineffective, arts and science faculties must accept a major share of the responsibility.

- Teacher educators may have shown little more willingness to change than their colleagues in the arts and sciences, but more than a little of their rigidity reflects state imposed certification requirements they cannot ignore.

- Efforts to change teacher education quantitatively in the absence of considerations about its purposes can at best only promise future disappointments. Granted, we may gain some relief from our frustrations by acting decisively and forcefully. But what consequences can we realistically expect from requiring more academic study, higher admission standards, and rigorous competency testing of prospective teachers? Fewer students, obviously. That alone will not produce better teachers, and unless we can become clearer about what will, neither the school systems nor the colleges and universities will be able to explain convincingly why they should restrict access to the profession while shortages of qualified teachers mount.

- Careerism is a common affliction in higher education, with the result that we are preparing technically proficient but unlettered doctors, lawyers, engineers, and computer scientists. There is, in brief, pervasive failure in the education of professionals in this country.

Excellence in teacher education requires improvements in two directions. First, the policy environment must be reordered. Local and state governments must provide the professional conditions and inducements needed to make teaching an attractive, rewarding career for the ablest high school graduates. Colleges and universities must provide the funding, facilities, and equipment necessary for high quality preparation programs. The criteria used by universities and colleges to judge the performance of education faculty must encourage and reward applied educational research and must support technical assistance to schools and school professionals.

"Until teaching becomes a more attractive career alternative, the problems of attracting and retaining talented teachers will undermine the success of other reforms intended to upgrade educational programs and curricula."

Linda Darling-Hammond, *Beyond the Commission Reports*

The second direction for improvement speaks to teacher education programs themselves. Excellence in teacher preparation requires programs that maintain a necessary balance between research-based knowledge and professional practice in schools. We do not speak of a balance between theory and practice. For too long now, teacher education has been guided by an orthodoxy which judged practice in light of established theory. The result has been theory that lacked the power to illuminate or explain — in short, nontheory — and teachers who acquired a distinct dislike for any notion wearing the label. Educational research of the past decade has made such results unnecessary. Knowledge drawn from field research in schools yields a deeper understanding of teachers' instructional roles. Other recent knowledge *about* education yields new insights of the conditions affecting professional practice in schools and of teachers' responsibilities beyond instruction.

These two relatively distinct research literatures offer great improvement in teacher education by permitting programs that are simultaneously realistic and illuminating with respect to school practice. Preparation programs, of course, should be realistic. They must help students to understand actual professional roles and to acquire the related skills. Studies of effective teachers have now identified skills and expertise that can be studied and practiced in preparation programs. Research on successful schools enables preparation programs to describe and recommend institutional characteristics that promote learning and build staff morale. The effectiveness research offers further advantages. It presents refined field observation and data gathering methods that invite inquiry and continuing self study on the part of school professionals themselves.

"To think about our craft . . . involves thinking about schools in their complex social and political frameworks . . . attending to patterns of belief and conduct in the surrounding community — phenomena that cannot but mediate what we do, what we are permitted to do, what we can expect of the young."

Maxine Greene, "How Do We Think about Our Craft?"

Unfortunately, the emphasis on clinical knowledge — the findings from schools and actual teacher practices — has occurred at the expense of the new knowledge *about* education. Drawn from recent research in the history, sociology, and philosophy of education, and education policy analysis, this literature also brings important new resources to preparation programs. It helps prospective teachers understand the influence of such factors as social class, race, ethnicity, and gender on the goals and outcomes of schooling. It enables them to document the effects of school organization and policy on student aspiration and to examine connections among the modes of school finance, educational opportunity, and achievement. It also demonstrates how fluctuating public interest in schools is correlated with economic conditions and political moods. Addressing a variety of professional responsibilities and concerns, this body of recent educational research establishes an impressive knowledge base for preparation programs. It offers a substantial alternative to anecdotal

content, which critics fault, and it exhibits a quality of mind which renders education a rigorous, challenging, and important area of study. Bringing a more profound understanding of the actual conditions of professional practice, this knowledge base permits much greater confidence in designing and assessing preparation programs.

If teachers are central to excellence in schools, as we insist they are, teacher education serves as the critical introduction to complex professional roles. It sets the tone and initial conditions for professional development. It can train teachers to docility, or try to, leaving to chance whether they will acquire a sense of professional integrity and responsibility. Teacher education programs that compromise standards or lack challenging content debase the profession. Programs lacking a scholarly base, or built on dated or unreliable research findings, tell beginning teachers that knowledge and expertise are irrelevant to professional practice. Those programs limited to instructional methods tacitly reduce teaching to technique.

"Professional judgment is a prerequisite for good teaching, because unless students are treated according to their *particular* learning needs, they will be mistreated. Standardized practice is, in essence, malpractice."

Linda Darling-Hammond, *Beyond the Commission Reports*

The effectiveness literature has attracted more than its share of entrepreneurs willing to reduce teacher education to "training" and to treat prospective teachers as "trainees" who become effective by following instructions. The "cookbook" approach to teacher education offers reassuring answers to worries of the what-will-I-do-on-Monday variety, but it does not help teacher candidates strengthen their capacity for making professional judgments. Classroom particularities demand thoughtful rather than routine applications, and misleading prospective teachers about so fundamental a matter is one way to thwart their effectiveness. Preparation programs can easily provide students with opportunities to practice and be coached in various teaching styles and to experience the benefits of professional collaboration. The goal is crucial. Is the program organized to move teacher candidates toward greater self sufficiency or does it leave them bound to techniques devised and recommended by others?

The common view is that teachers do no more than teach. Teachers themselves know better. They must keep current in their field of specialization, prepare for classes, and evaluate student work. They must simultaneously be experts in three areas: content, methodology, and evaluation. They must know what they are teaching, they must know how to teach it, they must know the methods by which knowledge is generated, and they must be able to detect to what extent content has been learned. Such demands make teaching one of the most difficult assignments undertaken by any professional group. It is conceptually taxing, physically and emotionally exhausting, and profoundly experimental. It consists of the regular application of subject matter and methodological knowledge in group settings. With experience, teachers can devise their own preparation routines and general

principles for presenting content to particular students, but they must be prepared also to abandon strategies often on the thin basis of an intuition that a plan is not working. Diagnosis of student learning styles, evaluation of student work, and prescription for further study can never become routine if the point is to promote learning.

Four themes in research on student achievement help unwrap other less visible aspects of the instructional role and provide direction for teacher preparation. First, the research has found even more disturbing conditions than the now familiar declines in academic achievement. Student achievement does not vary randomly but is strongly influenced by particular student characteristics. Race, gender, ethnicity, and social class have an impact, and the effects sometimes differ systematically by academic subject, geographical region, and the population density of the school's immediate community. Such complex influences illustrate the difficulties teachers confront in meeting their primary responsibility to promote and assess student learning. They need to be knowledgeable about the social context of schools.

"There is no recognition, in the reports, that we struggle with a segmented and segregated school system, stratified by class, race and often gender, in which needs and learning styles vary considerably."

Our Children At Risk

Second, student achievement research also notes a widespread decline in social/civic learning, a situation that threatens the most enduring rationale for public education in the United States. At minimum, Thomas Jefferson warned, Americans require sufficient education to know political ambition in its various disguises and to cast an informed ballot. In addition, public schools have been expected to engender and disseminate an understanding and appreciation of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, of the nation's dependence on a shared commitment to just and fair laws, and of the defense of individual freedoms as the most certain route to the general welfare. The decline in civic learning may well bring a retreat from these essential political values. To reverse the trend, teachers must shoulder additional instructional responsibilities. As most of us fully appreciate, effective preparation for citizenship cannot be limited to courses on American government. Rather, by example and direct pedagogy in all sorts of settings, teachers of various subjects induce appreciation for such civic values as fairness, equity, and decency. Their efforts can bring meaning to the notion of "we the people." It makes sense, therefore, to expect that the civic education of teachers will be shaped by both formal and indirect instruction. The latter will be conveyed, in part, by the policies, organization, and the guiding purpose of the preparation program.

Third, recent student achievement research has emphasized the poor showing of American students relative to their counterparts in other countries. The advice often taken from such research seeks to refashion this country's schools in the image of those of Japan or

Germany. For some time school professionals in the United States are likely to confront recommendations that they adopt the methods, curricula, and school policies of other countries. They need to be able to review such proposals intelligently and render informed judgments about them. This demands knowledge and understanding of the cultural contexts of schools in the United States and abroad. In turn, such preparation enables teachers to widen the national and cultural horizons of their students, an important consideration, since student achievement research also finds American young people profoundly uninformed about the world beyond their national borders.

Finally, achievement research indicates that American students are narrow in yet another way. They tend to demonstrate a single mode of knowing. This is not surprising, given the school's emphasis on developing the kind of mental ability that can be measured on paper and pencil tests. It means, however, that American students are disadvantaged in their ability to make qualitative judgments or apply aesthetic criteria. They seem to be relatively unacquainted with those aspects of culture that display knowledge in forms other than descriptive prose statements or mathematical formulas. By devising multiple instructional strategies and evaluation criteria, teachers can help students overcome such intellectual narrowness. But we cannot expect teachers to be effective in these regards, if their own professional preparation has not expanded their awareness of the various forms in which knowledge is expressed.

These four sets of findings from recent student achievement research point beyond the results of formal instruction. Students acquire social/civic learning, global awareness, or aesthetic appreciation, for example, with the help of effective pedagogical strategies. But surely cognitive learning alone does not produce a responsible citizen, someone able to understand different cultures, or a person able to exercise aesthetic judgment. The instructional role is played out on many stages, including classrooms, and its effects move unpredictably beyond compartmentalized subject matters. Student achievement research implications confirm what successful teachers know about the nuances and difficulties of their instructional roles. Excellence in teacher education requires preparation for these complex responsibilities.

When observed or questioned, teachers reveal other responsibilities in addition to those related to their instructional roles. They supervise apprentices, oversee extra curricular activities, counsel parents and students, and play community leadership roles. In various settings, intentionally or not, they are exemplars of educational purpose and social values. Teachers work behind unprotected school and classroom walls. They function within a policy environment set by federal

"Particularly pertinent to teacher education is what could be called *teaching context knowledge*. This . . . informs us about influences . . . that emanate from beyond the . . . teacher and student . . . [It] gives the prospective teacher the 'bigger picture' of what goes on in schools and why."

Joseph Vaughan,
Journal of Teacher Education,
July-August, 1984

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mandates, state legislation, school board directives, school system organization, and school building practices. Daily they contend with schools that are at once rationalized bureaucracies and untidy political and cultural systems. Their several instructional roles are clearly not performed on a bare stage.

"Although prospective teachers have spent considerable time in schools . . . their views of the school are from the vantage points of student rather than teacher, and child rather than adult."

Gary Griffin,
Journal of Teacher Education
July-August, 1984

Education students are typically unaware of the variety and number of competing claims on teachers. In elementary and high schools they had few opportunities to see schools as constructed systems. They rarely witnessed the off-stage activities: teachers developing curricula, adjusting course plans to students, assessing achievement, calculating ways to recognize student effort as distinct from achievement, bargaining with principals and each other over course schedules, placating maintenance staff, debating educational goals, or negotiating professional responsibilities with school boards. Having seen only the results of such efforts, they have little experience with teachers as members of a faculty that in turn functions within a larger organization. Teacher education students thus begin their preparation programs with a distorted, if predictable, view of the skills and knowledge they need for effective professional practice. One task of undergraduate teacher education is to unmask that illusion.

We have depicted the teacher's world in some detail to counter simplistic and hasty critiques of teacher education. Given the many roles of teachers, the components of preparation programs become clear. Because wide knowledgeability, cultural appreciation, and learning for the pleasure of it serve them professionally, teachers benefit from a coherent general education. They must be secure in a field of specialization, and they must know how to plan, manage time, and assess learning. They can expect to be more effective if they know how to work collaboratively. There is much support nowadays for increased emphasis on field experiences, on observation and student teaching. We agree that such experiences can help demystify classroom teaching, but they benefit prospective teachers only under certain conditions. If the students go as informed observers, if they are skilled in collecting observational data, and if their work in classrooms is closely supervised, they may be able to develop perspectives on the instructional roles that are more sophisticated than those they brought from high school. Finally, to be effective in the schools' policy environment and in meeting their noninstructional responsibilities, education students need to know *about* education and to experience schools as more than collections of classrooms.

"Perhaps the most noteworthy aspect of the new era in educational policy . . . is the attempt to generate, locate, and reinforce a consensus on U.S. public schooling."

Mark G. Yudof,
Phi Delta Kappan,
March, 1984

These components constitute a format or general structure for teacher education. It permits colleges and universities to devise programs that respond to particular educational needs and conditions, whereas the current rush to reform threatens to impose a new

orthodoxy in teacher preparation. Such uniformity would be a giant step backward.

At the beginning of this section, we joined the call for dramatic improvement in teacher education, pointing to two reform directions. Reordering the policy environment lies clearly outside the purview of teacher education, although preparation programs certainly should promote rigorous understanding of education policy. The other direction for improvement, achieving a balance between research and the multiple realities of schools, requires action by education faculty. It implies purpose, organization, and content for teacher education which in turn establish context for the study and practice of pedagogical methods. Not all teacher education faculty need to be directly involved in the work of schools; but all should be familiar with how they work, and all should be able to maintain analytical distance from them. Preparation programs must rest on a research base of knowledge about classrooms and instruction, and knowledge about education, otherwise new teachers will have no professional knowledge to practice.

The research base requirement means also that teacher education must function within a structure of collegiality with schools. Such a connection provides a continuing reality check for teacher preparation, brings resources to help school professionals maintain critical perspectives, and can work to reduce the level of antagonism that currently poisons relations between schools and universities and between teachers and teacher educators.

Teacher education not only offers initial preparation for teaching, it also lays the foundation for inservice teacher education and for the preparation of administrators, curriculum specialists, and other school professionals. Examination of advanced preparation programs warrants far greater attention than we can provide here, although throughout this document we offer recommendations that suggest directions for inservice teacher education and graduate professional education programs. The research knowledge base offers content and structure for these programs as well as for undergraduate teacher education. We know a great deal about the characteristics of successful school leaders and about the predictable and unpredictable demands of their roles. We know, for example, that rigid, hierarchical divisions of labor between principals and teachers dampen school morale and undermine the development of coordinated plans to promote student learning. We know that technically proficient school managers who lack educational vision tend to be defensive about established procedures and unsupportive of teacher initiative. These examples suggest that graduate programs in professional education, like undergraduate teacher education, should balance attention to research findings and established policy and practice. They should reflect both knowledge about special roles and study of the purposes, contexts, and characteristics of schools. Graduate students in educational administration, counseling, curriculum, and evaluation should pursue some of

their courses and field experiences together. Such shared experiences could help prepare school professionals for the interdependence they must achieve to foster educational excellence.

Excellence in professional education is measured by the qualities of mind and spirit it engenders in those being prepared to work in schools. This means necessarily the education of professional people whose universe of understanding and expertise becomes larger than their classrooms and schools. Initial professional preparation establishes the conditions for professional growth. It is literally and practically liberating and thus nourishes the realistic expectation that schools can always become better than they are.

SIX

CONCLUSION

Schools of pride and promise for all the people — that is our shorthand description of educational excellence. Americans are once again pursuing that most demanding goal. Through good times and bad over the past two centuries, we have repeatedly been drawn by educational ideals larger and more generous than our capacity to build schools. We have put them in sod houses on the Kansas prairie, log cabins in the Western Reserve, and around the kitchen tables of New England mothers. We have fought over them and in them, held them in awe and disdain, and over the years learned to insist that all our children — boys and girls of whatever race or condition — have access to the opportunities we hoped public schools would afford.

"Education is always more essential in our arguments than in our appropriations."

David Cohen,
Harvard Educational Review,
February, 1984

In retrospect, disappointment seems to have been inevitable. We have always expected more of schools than we were actually willing to spend on them. We have thought that changing them would be easier than social reform, that somehow crime or unemployment or urban discord would abate if schools were better. We have used them to help fight our wars and sharpen our competitive edge in the world economy. Typically school reform itself became contentious. After two centuries, schools dot the landscape in such numbers that they constitute our most prevalent and visible public institution. Recently, the school has also become our most scrutinized public institution. And today it is being pushed to improve in the name of excellence.

Throughout this history, fueled by high ideals, vaulting rhetoric, and pitched battles, we have periodically forgotten that school improvement stubbornly remains, in David Clark's phrase, "a people process." He means to remind us not only of human frailties but also of the great diversities that characterize the American educational system. Indeed, variations from school to school, district to district, and state to state render descriptions of *a* public school system in the United States extremely difficult. As a people we share political values, face common educational problems, and adapt each other's solutions. On many occasions in the past and currently, localities and states have confronted prohibitions against policies and practices judged to be unwise or illegal from the national perspective. Even in regard to questions of equity and fairness, however, imposed mandates achieve their purposes through local compliance. So it is with all educational reform. The arena of significant action is local, and it is inevitably qualified by people.

Ultimately, our quest for excellent schools becomes a people process.

No formulas or grand strategies are available to guarantee success across the land or even within a single state. Can federal or state legislation or department of education directives inspire or goad local effort? Unquestionably, in some states, for some school districts, for some of the time. Given the resources and incentives, teachers and principals will work to make their school excellent. Educational excellence is, however, a continuing process, not an attainment to be possessed, and there will be great variety among the ways excellence is sought and realized in schools across the nation.

"Schools would be markedly different if their ongoing function was to ensure successful performance . . . We would not put up for long with a physician who sent our child home with an F for health but no assistance in becoming healthy."

John Goodlad,
A Place Called School

We have attempted in this document to identify some basic characteristics and conditions of educational excellence. We have warned that the paths to that goal lie in other and sometimes opposing directions from some of the strategies enjoying current popularity. Misdirection can be seriously harmful for the young people denied the opportunity to become what they could have been and, of course, for the nation it can yield a fresh round of disappointments. Educational excellence that is exclusionary by design promises to increase and ignite the social dynamite of which James Conant warned us two decades ago. There is no denying that young people learn at different rates and depths, that great achievement for some is easily surpassed by others. Nor should we pamper ignorance or sloth. Our point rather has been to underscore what can be learned from countless schools that are demonstrating the compatibility of excellence and equity.

Thoughtful, deliberate consideration of what we want most from schools is the first step toward achieving excellence. School purpose arrived at in *ad hoc* fashion offers no more guidance or inspiration than one handed down from on high. Repairs to the curriculum and altered graduation requirements produce additive reforms that become a later generation's problems. In choosing educational purpose, we define ourselves and we chart the future. Few matters are deserving of more careful collective attention, the current rush to change schools notwithstanding. Participation in this public conversation must be widely inclusive at state and national levels and, if we want excellence, it must eventually take place among the participants and constituents of local schools, where the most important educational action inevitably occurs.

Direction for pursuing the critical question of school purpose comes from the dictates of our national democratic commitment and from the requisites of healthy human development. There is no need to choose whether individual interests or society's interests should be the primary directive force in schooling. Both must be served. Separately and together, they recommend the cultivation of intellectual power as the school's central purpose. This focus does not rule out the other pursuits and activities directly related to the diverse functions the American

people rightly expect schools to perform. Intellectual power serves rather as an articulating principle that suffuses and informs all of the school's activities and procedures.

Excellence emerges only from commitment. It is offered by people, not imposed on them. No one can be forced into it. Try as we may, we will never arrive at curricula, or teaching technologies, or testing requirements that can make classrooms teacher-proof, "kid-proof," or otherwise immune to the vagaries of a people process. And well we should not. Educational excellence depends finally on teachers and students. The evidence from outstanding schools, as well as from other institutions, suggests that organizational environment can encourage or subvert the commitment to excellence. In these regards, we recommend that school environment be marked by efficacy, collegiality, and what we have called user friendliness.

Educational excellence requires that instructional strategies originate as close to individual classrooms as possible. Education requires that such be the case. Of course, directions for schools and for teachers and students come from many local, state, national, and even federal sources. As public institutions, schools necessarily respond to the concerns and dictates of the immediate, state, and national community. But the nature of teaching and learning advises the form and spirit these directions should take. It suggests that school system authorities and education policy makers function most powerfully as enablers. They must help to create the conditions which empower teachers and students to reach for excellence.

"An effective school is a work of art. It orchestrates . . . its students and parents and community in concerted efforts toward educational excellence. It enlists the creative abilities of all . . . Above all, it is unique, responsive to personalities and values and needs and abilities that are never fully duplicated in any other school."

Doxey Wilkerson,
Educating All Our Children

Attracting and keeping outstanding professionals in schools certainly belong on the excellence agenda. They require reforms in two directions. First, the environment and organization of schools must be professionally rewarding, and teacher salaries in particular must be higher. Some may try to convince the public that the quest for educational excellence demands neither policy reform nor additional funds, but if they succeed a good and valuable aspiration may collapse under the weight of dead rhetoric. Second, reform in the preparation programs of colleges and universities must include consistently rigorous admission requirements and academic standards, a coherent general education, professional studies that draw upon research and knowledge about effective practice, and an area of specialized knowledge and expertise. To achieve the necessary improvements, colleges and universities will have to place far greater emphasis on professional education, they will have to make wider use of their faculties in planning preparation programs, and they will have to learn to collaborate more effectively with schools and professional educators.

Improving public education in this country seems to occur in cycles.

Critics have noted the prevalence of fads and single issues. Then, when energy fails or distractions occur, the effort wilts. Excellence in education deserves a better fate. But it will require our persistent attention, high tolerance for diversity and ambiguity, and a regular diet of intelligence and creativity. It is only at such a cost that we can underwrite a never-ending process: making schools of pride and promise available to succeeding generations of all the people.

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Pride and Promise: Schools of Excellence for All the People has been informed by the writing and thinking of many individuals, by major studies of schools, and by reports on the state of the public school and how to improve it. These works are cited in the bibliography to follow. The influence of John I. Goodlad, *A Place Called School* will be apparent to all who are familiar with it. The message of Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., in *In Search of Excellence* is also a recurring one in these pages. The ideas of Theodore R. Sizer, as expressed in *Horace's Compromise,* and of Ernest L. Boyer in *High School,* have clearly affected our thinking.

In addition to these sources, Section One, "The Challenge of Our Expectations," has been influenced by a number of recent reports, particularly by *A Nation At Risk*. While we believe that the limitations of this report, including important matters ignored or slighted, reduce its merit, we acknowledge its role in bringing overdue attention to public schools. John Goodlad, *What Schools Are For* was helpful in identifying the functions performed by schools.

Section Two, "The Challenge of Purpose" owes much to John R. Mergendoller for his article "To Facilitate or Impede?" Kenneth Strike, *Educational Policy and the Just Society* helped us frame the connection between democracy and public schooling.

Section Three, "An Environment for Outstanding Schools," has been shaped by school organization and climate literature and by visits to and reports on secondary schools honored through the United States Department of Education's Secondary School Recognition Program. Michael Lipsky, *Street-Level Bureaucracy* was also particularly helpful.

Section Four, "Generating Educational Excellence," adds the influence of several other scholars not previously mentioned: Eliot Wigginton, Diane Hedin, Joe Nathan, and Robert E. Slavin.

Finally, Section Five, "Educating Teachers for Excellence," was instructed by the numerous recent studies and critiques of teacher education, as well as studies of outstanding schools, of effective teaching, and of student achievement.

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